



Start of [In Defense of Jewish Resistors].

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2/1 In Defense of Jewish Religion

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My American friends ask, why didn't Jews in Germany use the fist? These questioners misinterpret the entire situation. The less than 1/2 % Jews within the German population lived mainly in scattered small communities. For instance I was the only Jewish student in the upper grade of the one high school (Gymnasium) of my home town. Sure I had a bloody nose every so often. And that was before Hitler. Berlin was the one exception where some 100 000 Jews out of a total population of 4 million congregated in certain districts. Even here the Jewish leaders had mostly grown up in small towns. For generations German Jews had belonged to the so-called Land Order groups which is to say that they struggled for equal rights without taking to the streets. But after the last world war things changed. Jewish students on university campuses were frequently involved in brawls. In the forementioned "Reichsbanner" was organized for the protection of the republic at the end of the 1920th most young Jews joined the ranks. In the districts of Berlin the accusation was made that the local Reichsbanner groups were "verjudeet". I was one of many wearing the uniform, participating in street fights and demonstrating against the Nazis. I remember very clearly our last huge Reichsbanner demonstration in the Berlin Lustgarten shortly after the Nazi takeover. I saw many Jewish young men there. The cry was raised then and there. Let's march to the chancellery. But all exit roads were blocked by police in trucks with mounted machine guns. That was the last time that I wore the republican insignia and carried a truncheon. I tossed it all in a lake at night. I offer few other examples relating to the use of physical strength. The C.V. Bureau in the Eiserstr. (not the Bund) employed in the early 1930th a kind of security guard, Mr. Simonsohn. This young man had tremendous biceps. I frequently went with him to political rallies and he walked just through groups of brown shirted men with me right close behind him. Of course that was shortly before 1933. Thereafter once we were about 20 young Jews, female and male, waiting in a private home, when the place was raided by brown shirts and police. When I addressed myself to the leading police officer he told me that the brown shirted SA was in charge of such transactions. In the first weeks of 1933 we organized Jewish night patrols for some of the Jewish Centers. Fortunately we were never challenged. But of course with hindsight now this was practically suicidal. Another time we organized a Jewish youth meeting in Frankfurt/Oder, near Berlin. It must have been some 10 boys and girls standing a row and in front of them a line of Jewish women. The day before to the rally I let the strongest boys form a rear guard as well as march a head of our column. We were jeered by lots of brown shirts but not attacked. I mention these few incidents to show that civil courage was not lacking. However, it must be understood that after January 1933 the streets belonged to the Nazis, who did

police work

DEUTSCHER ZENTRAL-VEREIN DEUTSCHER STAATSBÜRGER JÜDISCHER GLAUBENS.

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no 1.

(5 years before the Nazi take over)
All the time the question rises why the Jews of Germany did not even
try to defend themselves against the Nazis. The following answers are
offered by someone who participated in efforts to combat the Nazis
with hindsight. These attempts might have been feeble, too little, too
late. But critics are challenged to tell what else under the
circumstances they would have done except making foolish suggestions.
The by far largest representation of the then some 500,000 Jews
residing in Germany, out of a total population of about 70 million,
was the "Central Verein Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens."
Already before 1930 the C.V. - for short - centered its Anti-Nazi activity
in a separate organization, called "Bund Deutscher Aufbau". It's
headquarters were in the Wilhelmstr. in Berlin, close to the capital's
government district. It was chaired by the non-Jewish Lt. Colonel of the
Police, Dünzlow. But the actual work was done by a syndicate of the C.V.,
Dr. Hans Reichmann. In the summer of 1930 I became a junior staff member
of the Bund. I was also a student at the Friederich Wilhelms University
in Berlin, until I was expelled from the campus for "anti-Nazi" activities
in August of 1933. The staff of the Bund was mixed, Jew and non-Jews,
depending on the task at hand. For instance we employed a number of
"infiltrators" who made almost daily reports to us. I remember, for instance
a respectable teacher, Mr. Fedler, who even after the "Machtergreifung"
remained in touch with us. This material and everything else we could
gather, was incorporated into a loose leaf handbook, the "Mitte" which
was widely distributed to the media and to important representatives of
all German political groups, unions, churches etc., outside the Nazi fold.
I also handled a newspaper, "Alarm", our answer to Goebbels' daily, the
"Angriff". We wrote articles for the press, under our own names, of course.
We produced and displayed posters in Berlin and other cities, so often
sensational that they caused clashes between brown-shirted storm-
troopers and the general public. Reaction to all that in the Nazi press
was heated, which means that we hit the mark. I remember the name of the
politician Stein, who printed all our material.
My job was to read about 100 newspapers and mark any item which referred
to Nazi-propaganda and activities. These were cut out and incorporated
into archive-files.

Handwritten signature

From that weekly news release was put together and once more distributed widely. We also answered inquiries by phone and by mail. We, of course, could not have any "researcher" come to our office. But I remember that we were visited by such personalities as the president of the republican answer to the brown shirted stormtroopers, the uniformed Reichsbanner, Mr. Hoersing, Mr. Breitscheid, member of the Reichstag, Prelate Kaas of the Berlin Diocese. I also hand delivered material to political figures. The Bund also supported special projects to dig up Nazi's past. I remembered that a staff member, Mr. Cyssling, spent several weeks in Braunau, Hitler's birthplace.

My lesson tells me that the files in the archive were numbered from one to at least 900 with subdivisions under each number like 101a, b, c etc. For instance the file on Goebbels was broken up into a. childhood and education, b. c. court cases etc. I see myself sitting at my desk marking newspaper clippings with a red pencil, thereafter turning this over to Mr. Gumpert, who put the clippings and filed them into the respective folders. I also remember taking the folders out of floor to ceiling cabinets which in the evening were locked. All that occupied one room in an ordinary first floor Berlin apartment with Dr. Reichmann's office in a larger second room. The remainder of the apartment inhabited by a landlady. That this place was never raided by marauding brown shirts is now with hindsight surprising. Seemingly while working there the thought had never occurred to me. Shortly before the "Machtuebernahme" the files were moved. Obviously the Wilhelmstr. office was given up. I see myself very clearly sitting in a backroom of the CV Bureau, Emserstr. 42 in Berlin still marking and numbering newspaper clippings with the file cabinet along the wall and Dr. Reichmann's office once more in a next room. Why the transfer of such dangerous material to the headquarters of the CV? I do not know. But it was Emserstr. and not Wilhelmstr. because I walked from my room in the Uhlenstr. to work. How did those files disappear? I am certain that we loaded them on trucks. I was under the impression that they disappeared in the printing plant of Arnold Strass. There was only a rumor that some of the folders had been sent to Berlin. But my knowledge now has overruled these folders left in 1937. I shall refrain here from further evaluation of the work of the Bund. My personal feeling was that and still is that I participated in important anti-Nazi activities. I was always proud that I saw our material up in newspapers and on posters and displays on billboards. I might have inadvertently used the swastika symbol too often in our counter propaganda. But we were blind to hindsight.

In the first weeks of 1933 the C.V. bureau to which I had been transferred from the "Bund" was flooded by Jewish people who reported beatings, kidnapping by brownshirts etc. etc. We, of course, realized that this was revolution. Little did we suspect that all this would be only a prelude. The leading executives were advised to remain in their homes and thus avoid the disgrace of being beaten and dragged into cellars etc. Thus we, the junior staff members, with more tolerance and without families to worry about were in the forefront. The first report of a Jewish storeowner by the name of Goldstein in Koenigsberg beaten to death came to me. What was then so grotesquely new was that this man was not only beaten to bloody pulp but that salt and pepper was poured into the open wounds. At that time we still reported these incidents to the police with outrage. The only result was that the police came on March 30, 1933 - my birthday - to the C.V. bureau and confiscated this material as "treasonous". In other times, still in the beginning of 1933, a group of Jewish school boys appeared in my office. Instead of telling me they removed their shirts and showed me the bloody salt all over their backs I was then still so enraged that I persisted on the phone until I reached the Lt. Governor of that province. He seemed embarrassed and promised redress. Of course, nothing happened. This gentleman was typical of the officials of the old school, who either were replaced or "reeducated", and then there was the often quoted telephone call to the C.V. office by Dr. Diels, who was a turn-coat and became the right hand of Goering in the transition period. I had picked up one of several phones and listened in. Dr. Diels transmitting the "request" of Goering to see CV leaders in his office in a short time. The fact that men like Alfred Israel, Ludwig Meitz, Ernst Wallach thereafter traveled to various world capitals to call off the boycott of German goods by world Jewry is much discussed. Of course, e.g., the young Jews, debated it also. But was there really a choice? After all 500,000 Jews in Germany were at the mercy of Mr. Goering. At that time we struggled for time. None named Jewish leaders carried the responsibility for the Jews inside not outside of the Third Reich.

Now more on the very low level. Here I among several C.V. staffers tried to help. The various troops of brownshirts were identifiable by numbers on their shirt collars. There was also the newly organized special field police of Goering etc. (not so much the black uniformed S.S. at the time) I learned to coordinate the numbers with the lofts, cellars etc. which each outfit used

as "interrogation" center. Then we could tell families where their loved ones had disappeared to. Sometimes we sent a lawyer with Nazi credentials into such dens who occasionally achieved the release of a badly beaten individual. Of course they always had to sign a statement that they fell down the stairs etc. At other time a courageous neighbor would take a blanket, coat etc. to such a place. If it was accepted, we knew that the missing person was still alive. For the Nazis kept books. I myself went only to the police headquarters. Berlin-Alexanderplatz with such pretended inquiries. I remember once seeing Rabbi Prinz being taken to a cell. Sometimes I even went to Gestapo headquarters, Berlin-Prinz Albrecht str. This was esp. scary. One saw blood covered Jews taken from "interrogations" back to cells. One also heard screaming of the tortured. Normally a colleague went with me and watched in safe distance from the building entrance for my return. One could leave the building only if one of the "interrogators" signed release. I was usually encountering two officials, Kuchmann and Eichmann. Neither was then high up the ladder. The latter even came sometimes to the C.V. office asking for certain books, translation of Hebrew words etc. Seemingly he was preparing himself for advancement in the newly organized Div. IV (Jew Dep)? He was not exactly friendly but also not abusive. One I was sitting with my fiancée in a coffee shop frequented by Jews when Eichmann and his cohort were conducting a razzia. He just nodded to us and disregarded our table.

C.V. ^{responsibilities} In those days, sanctioned by the newly organized Jewish roof representation, the "Reichsvertretung", was Jewish economic survival. Emigration, in the hands of the Hilfsverein, proved extremely slow and hazardous (not even the United States wanted us in any numbers, he hoped then against odds that Jews in Germany could outlast the Third Reich. Besides what choice was there. In executing this policy the C.V. leaders did not respect old legality or even laws from the new government. He tried to point out that the boycott of Jewish owned stores would endanger the jobs of none Jewish employees, that various laws could involve none Jewish insurance companies, that interference with Jewish owned plants would interrupt the general flow of business in Germany etc. etc. In that regard Dr. Schlacht, minister of economics, after used our opinion in his directive, published in government gazettes, we learned those by heart. Our syndical and other staff were endlessly sent to the respective authorities petitioning for relief for groups or individuals.

My responsibilities within this frame were Jews in the ambulatory trade, owners of butchershops, small grain merchants etc. It all depended on who of the C.V. staff had encountered what problems in the first chaotic weeks and had established the first contacts with the respective Nazi authorities. If the case grew to major proportions one of the older C.V. officials accompanied me. My minor successes illustrate our struggle overall. For instance our ambulatory merchants were driven off fair grounds.

We worked it this way that Jews were allowed to display their ware away from the general fairgrounds under "good Germans" so they would not buy from them! Our Jewish clients survived this way for some time, which indicates that the general public put the prize of merchandise over Nazi principle. In Berlin we even got permission that Jewish traders could sell their ware in Jewish owned vacant lots. There were no objections from the Jewish orthodoxy where the respective ground already had been stratched for the erection of a synagogue which now was not needed anymore. A Jewish tailor who did not get permit to open his shop was allowed to sell to Jewish customers. The same rule was used for Jewish theatres. In addition to some income these people at least had some protection against plunder raids. Jewish butchers could be spared of inspecting "inspections". So much information had been dropped thus in my visits to a "Reichswehrstand" office. We helped a Jewish owned hotel in a resort with the temporary removal of boycott signs pointing out that only Jewish guests would go there anyway etc. etc. The effort of the C.V. on behalf of Jewish layers and physicians are reported in other places.

Our Nazi counterparts in such negotiations were from courteous to abusive. For instance a "Reichswehrstand" official in the uniform of an SS Lt. Colonel offered a chair, held hands etc. Obviously he was not above suspicion. On the other hand a Hitler Youth leader in uniform screamed and threatened with concentration camp for daring to complain about Nazi activities. It seems to me that the farther away from Berlin the more "local" authorities were impressed with the *direction* of the Ministry of Economics represented.

Now I ask myself the question often: Give we people a right? Did we have a right by prolonging the miserable life of some Jews in Germany? Did we prevent them from migrating where the chances were still possible? No, it is the guilt of that time. It seems doubtful that Hitler himself would have allowed any type of Jewish survival.

At that time before staff members of the C.V. frequently traveled into the provinces to bring solace, information and help to the much more oppressed Jews there. All activities consisted of bringing food parcels, buying local stores did not sell to Jews. In Berlin there was at least the Kulturbund etc. In the provinces everything from hotel to restaurant had the infamous signs: "Jews are not allowed on premises." One meeting place was normally a synagogue, with a Gestapo agent present. Once when I returned to Berlin my passport was confiscated because in Marienburg/Westpr. I had said in my sermon in the synagogue that Jews should prepare for emigration. The "prepare" was objected to. One reason in such excursions was different: Upper Silesia. In this part of Germany plebiscite had taken place right after world war I. For the post-plebiscite the League of Nations had imposed certain guarantees of human rights on Hitler Germany for years and not violated that. Plus there was no boycott, no restriction etc. To tell Jews here that trouble was just around the corner was impossible. In a few single cases I took advantage of this extraordinary situation and sent Jews whose passports were confiscated and those who needed some "documentation" (marriage certificates in mixed marriages) to "relatives" in Upper Silesia. There at least they were not afraid to go to the police.

Once the C.V. sent me, the "unobtrusive" young man, to Amsterdam, where in the Alfred Wiener library I dictated for days from memory the stories of early Nazi atrocities. The material was published under a fictitious name. There was a long, of course, in this mission since I returned to work in Berlin.

All in all my seven years with the "Bund" and the C.V. gave me some expertise in Nazi organization and personalities. Much later as a US soldier in world war II I could put this knowledge to use when I worked as an Anti-Nazi specialist in Third Army HQ. He published the famous "Nazi Wanted List" in Bamberg. ^(photo available) He set up a Nazi wanted list office at the "Friedrich" in Bamberg. He put together a library including telephone books, in which the Nazis were listed with names etc. These were used extensively by military intelligence. In this job I also had personal contact with and former Nazi greats like Julius Fickler, Walter Darré, Heinrich Himmler, Duke of Coburg and a number of SS generals. I was also in charge of the collection of Jewish survivors in D.P. camps, taking care of their clothing, food, medicine, and other necessities, of course, with the Jewish A.I.R. I was also in charge of the collection of these things and of the distribution. There are many stories to tell and I am sure to tell them.



**End of [In Defense of Jewish
Resistors].**